

wherever he went. Even in the darkest days Lollardry was leavening society and causing great uneasiness to its triumphant enemies.

As his book is addressed to the layman, Pecock refrains from brandishing Church authorities, as all previous defenders of orthodoxy had done, and adopts the tone, not of a Pope speaking 'ex cathedra' but of a man taking his readers into his confidence. He gives this style of argument a name. He calls it * reason.' Reason, he says, is above Scripture; the meaning of Scripture can only be discovered by reason, and if the apparent meaning of Scripture and the obvious dictates of reason conflict, he goes so far as to say that we must abide by reason. The object of his book is to overturn by reason the scriptural basis on which the 'lay party' too confidently rested. They held that no ordinance is to be esteemed a law of God which is not founded on the Bible; that every humble Christian shall arrive at the true sense of Scripture; and that when the true sense has been discovered, all human arguments which oppose it are to be discarded. Having shown by appeals to reason that these propositions are not true, Pecock goes on to confute the particular applications of Bible-texts which the * lay party' had used upon such topics as images, pilgrimages, episcopal authority and ecclesiastical endowment. He was undoubtedly assaulting Wycliffe's stronghold by the practicable breach. The interpretations of Scripture, by which the * lay party' thought they proved their doctrines, were often clumsy and strained, the efforts of men at once ill-educated and pedantic. Pecock points out the flaws in these misinterpretations with great success, by the process of reason or common sense. But having done this he considers that he has done all, and refrains from inquiring whether faith in the invocation of Saints and the sacredness of images and relics might not be overturned by that very * reason' with which he has been exposing his opponents' fallacies. He proves, to his own satisfaction at least, that Scripture did not concern itself with forbidding the practices of the Roman Church, but he never really attempts to prove that reason has ordained them. The effective part of his argument is purely negative, and when h«